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THE CONDITION OF WOMAN IN ANCIENT EGYPT.

BY

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To discuss the condition of woman is to touch one of the most delicate problems of social science. Every form of that discussion is threadbare, save one, and that is to follow patiently the course of ancient history. Through all time humanity has been compelled to interrogate the shadows which envelop its cradle. Why not? Unless we know from what point humanity started, how can we know in what direction it is moving, and that is the ultimate object of our search ; the goal towards which the condition of woman is approaching.

In the poet Longfellow's Diary are these words : "Mr. Giles lectured last evening on Womanhood. I do not like to have woman discussed in public. Something within me rebels at the profanation!" I think I understand Mr. Longfellow's feeling, and it has my respect ; but I have hoped that some facts of history, so gathered and arranged that this desired goal may be brought nearer and reached sooner, might be presented so delicately that no offence would be given even to Mr. Longfellow's ghost.

In attempting the history of woman's condition in ancient Egypt, you ought not to tolerate an attempt to perpetuate the memory of traditions which have no pedestal of facts to rest on. You should refuse to be

astonished at empty theories grounded on surmises. I propose to confine myself to the actual statements and representations of ancient papyri and hieroglyphic inscriptions on the walls of tombs and temples. I have ransacked these monuments from the pyramid age down to the end of the Ptolemaic dynasty, and am not aware that any important witness has failed to be summoned. I shall use the exact words of these witnesses and promise to make no addition or change which can possibly produce a wrong impression. At the same time I shall refuse to join in the recent tirade against that immortal author, fitly called the "Father of History." I believe that no writer on the primitive conditions of society is more worthy of confidence than this same Herodotus. He may have been too credulous and he may have lacked the critical spirit essential to the historian; if so, then all the more carefully and accurately does he echo the popular beliefs of his day. It is antiquity itself that speaks in his book.

The problem of social science before us is not easy of solution. You can find nothing in heathen antiquity or in the Utopias of Saint-Simon or Fourier which can vie with the extravagances of the Greek philosophers on this subject. When we read the immortal dialogues inspired by the master of all philosophy, we see what sort of a lot Socrates and Plato have cast for woman in their republic. I must not repeat their language here, it would so outrage good taste and modesty; but if you care to read the Fifth Book of Plato's Republic, you will see that there is not, in all social science, another problem which has so thrown the human mind into sad disaster. According to Plato (Timæus II.), men who,

during life, have been cowards or unjust, in their second existence become women : while men, still more vicious, are changed into various kinds of still lower animals. Says Aristotle : "There are three classes of persons who are incompetent to act for themselves : slaves, children and women." Maimonides, one of the most illustrious interpreters of Jewish law, says that "a woman, no more than a child or a slave, is fit to study sacred law." This is the wisdom of the most highly polished nations of antiquity. Consequently the wildest theories have been put in practice. Conceptions that could have been hatched only in the crazy brain of some solitary dreamer have been realized in customs and sustained by laws. A rapid review of the condition of women in some other ancient nations may make a good background for the portrait of the generic Egyptian woman.

Woman, enslaved in some lands, in others has been the sovereign monarch. In one land has been practised polygamy, in another polyandry, and elsewhere the grossest promiscuity. We need not go back to the fabulous epoch of the Amazons to find women exercising over men the most cruel tyranny. Travellers tell us that in parts of Central Africa and Southern Asia women have their harems of men, while among the Tartar-Mongols they are held in the most brutal slavery.

In early times, throughout Europe and Asia, if a man wanted a wife he bought her and paid for her. However barbarous this may seem to us, it was the first step towards civilization, the foundation of the family, the greatest boon to mankind. In China, a pub-

lic official was accustomed to assemble, at the full moon of every vernal equinox, all the males of thirty years and all the females of twenty, and those who would not and did not marry, then and there, were punished. Among the Persians and Hindoos the father who neglected to marry his nubile daughter was shorn of his paternal power. A religious law took everything under its wing. It made it the chief duty of a woman to give birth to as many children as possible. The Sistine Madonna, the mother and the little child, has ever been the beau-ideal of perfect womanhood. That picture was as common on the temple walls of Egypt, 3,000 years ago, as it is now in Christian cathedrals. "Increase and multiply" was the divine command to the Hebrews. Surrounded by enemies, they were driven to the necessity of becoming more numerous that they might be more powerful than the nations around them.

While pantheism stifled the most generous aspirations of some parts of Asia, Moses taught the Hebrews, as a fundamental principle, to cherish a trust, or confidence, in a personal God. This God had created man in his own moral image. This principle, the germ of all liberty, produced fruit even on the unpromising soil of Asia. The acceptance of this faith is the foundation of the Mosaic institutions; is the explanation of the unparalleled history of that "Peculiar People." The almost republican constitution published at the foot of Sinai only increased the independence of the patriarchal tribes, and when afterwards the Hebrews accepted an absolute monarchy, they still found in their religious faith a "high refuge" against the excesses of Oriental

despotism. The voice of the prophet was the organ of the public conscience. It made the throne of the tyrant tremble ; for kings and peasants were alike tenants ; the only proprietor was the Eternal.

This lofty spiritual principle was reflected in the constitution of the family ; for the Lord established his covenant, not only with kings, but just as much with men, women and slaves. He is the father of the orphan ; He the judge of the widow. If the patriarchal organization of the family gave the father almost absolute power, that power was impressed with a sweetness and tenderness, under the influence of the first Great Command : "Thou shalt love." This law of love protected Hebrew women even in slavery. The Orient had never heard of such generous sentiments. Yet legislation in Palestine could not break away entirely from surrounding influences. Says the preacher (Eccl. viii. 26) : "I find one thing more bitter than death ; the woman whose heart is snares and nets ; one man among a thousand have I found, but a woman among those have I not found." Josephus says that the Essenes abstained from marriage, persuaded that among women there was not a single faithful one. That this is slander, the names of Hebrew women will testify. They had their Athaliah and their Jezebel, but they also had Miriam and Deborah, Ruth and Naomi, Hannah the mother of Samuel, Abigail the wife of Nabal, Esther the Queen of Ahasuerus, and hundreds of others of whom the world was not worthy.

In other parts of the Orient, as well as among the Hebrews, there was a custom called the Levirat. When a married man died, leaving no male offspring, his

brother or nearest relative must marry his widow, and, as the phrase was: "Raise up children to the dead man." The first male child of this union would be enrolled in the registry of the tribe, as the son of the defunct. In India and China, if the failure to raise children was due to the husband, he could lease his wife to his brother or nearest male relative, and the offspring of that lease would call the husband its father. The Hebrews would not go so far as that. Only after the husband was dead could his wife go to the nearest male relative. Under heavy penalties the widow must marry her husband's brother, willing or not. The Levirat dates back to the highest antiquity, and still exists among the tribes of the desert. In ancient Egypt, where every woman had unbounded liberty to marry or not, there could be no such custom. During the sacerdotal period the Egyptians were imbued with the belief that the greatest misfortune that could befall a man was to die childless, but they never thought of raising up a child to a dead man, and they never asked a woman to marry a man she did not love.

In republican Greece, even more than under Oriental despotism, the State absorbed the family and public law swallowed private interests. Individual rights never were so clearly defined as in Egypt and in Rome. Morality existed in the Greek mind, yet so bound up was it with the ideal, as a beautiful work of art, that what was becoming was the goal, rather than what was right. The hand of the State was manifest everywhere. It made an inventory not only of every man's property, but of the condition and government of his family. "In the time of your ancestors," says Demosthenes,

“your sons and your daughters belonged, not to their fathers and mothers, but to their native country.” If, at that time the head of a family maltreated his son, daughter, wife or ward, any citizen could bring an action before the criminal court for the redress of the injured one. Public authority took them under its protecting care. The people were sovereign. The only legislature, senate, congress or parliament was the popular assembly. Over the administration of justice no sacred college of Levites or of Brahmins had a monopoly. Before a jury chosen from the masses or else by lot, all the criminal and civil judgments of Athens were settled. Eloquence was more potent than ratiocination. Not by judicial arguments did Demosthenes and Lysias seek to win the suffrages of the people. They appealed to the passions. Free, and always on the move, Athenian law was the living expression of the popular customs, sentiments and emotions of the people, more anxious for progress than any other people the world has ever seen. It was the Greeks, not only in legislation, but in the whole domain of art and science, who emancipated the human spirit and opened to mankind the road to improvement.

Now, how did this Greek spirit, sometimes playing the despot in the state, sometimes breathing the most democratic freedom, affect the private condition of woman? In all Greek cities, where public affairs were debated in assemblies, the citizen spent his time in the market-place; by turns, lawyer, judge, prosecuting attorney, legislator, administrator and soldier. If man lived abroad, woman was confined at home. She could not be admitted even to the family table, if a friend of

the family took his place there. Relegated to the gynæcium, which only the nearest relatives were permitted to enter, she might go out only on rare occasions specified by law. Thus, intercourse between the sexes was interrupted, domestic life suppressed and marriage rendered unattractive, because nothing but an odious duty imposed by the interests of the State. Says Plato in the Banquet: "We are not led to marriage naturally. It is necessary because the law demands it." How changed were those times of Solon from the high civilization of the Homeric age! "It is not chaste," says Achilles, "it is not reasonable in man not to cherish and honor his wife." "Nothing good here below," says the husband of Penelope, "is so precious as the conjugal union, over which reigns the concord of a mutual love." Arete, the wife of Alcinous, shared the honors and almost the power of her husband. "When she went into the city," says the record, "all the people saluted her. Men honoured her as a goddess and submitted to her their differences." Such were the patriarchal customs not only in heroic Greece, but in all primitive society of which history or poetry has preserved the memory. When patriarchal life gave place to life in democratic cities, when man forsook his fireside for the public assembly, then woman fell into neglect, which time rendered more and more complete. In his childhood and youth, the young Athenian received a liberal education. At maturity he began to spend his days in discussions at the Agora or at the theatre or amid the philosophic debates of the Poicile, but woman, the teacher of his childhood, she was to learn as little as possible. With her, virtue consisted in staying at home.

All that an Athenian girl needed to know was to sing and dance and figure in the chorus. The progress of civilization was always made to turn against women. The more man was elevated the more she was neglected. This is the rear view of Greek civilization.

One class of Greek women, free from domestic restraints, could mingle with men in their pursuits. Courtezans applied themselves assiduously to the most advanced studies and, in sprightliness of intellect and extent of learning, were the equals of men. Their society afforded the Greeks just the intellectual enjoyment they craved, but which they could not find at home. The most virtuous among the Athenians had no scruples about admitting an Aspasia to his philosophical conversations, though his wife, not even by her tears and in her dying hour, could attract his attention or obtain his assistance.

Monogamy, derived from Egypt, was a fundamental law of Greece. Even if it was violated, it promoted the equality of husband and wife. If the infidelity of the wife could be punished, so could that of the husband. If the husband could pronounce the word divorce, the woman could appeal to the archon to pronounce that word for her. She did not often appeal in vain ; and so divorces became as easy in Athens as in that city on our western prairies, in whose suburbs, conductors of express trains are said to shout : " This train will stop fifteen minutes for divorces."

If we do not find woman more honoured in Egypt than elsewhere, we do find her position peculiar. " Egypt is the classic land of astonishments." Every institution there was affected by religious sentiment, the

family more than any other. The earliest idea of God in Egypt was that of a dual being, equally divine and glorious in both aspects of its double nature. Isis was believed to be the consort of Osiris, although they were twins, and wedded before they were born. She was inferior to him in office, though of the same nature (or essence, as the theologians call it). It was the logical consequence of this belief that Egyptian women were never bought and sold, never kept in seclusion and ignorance, never regarded as slaves or chattels, as in every other ancient nation. The remnants of this belief existed, according to Tacitus, in the superstitions of the rude but enthusiastic Germans, who saw in this frail being, whom they could sell or kill, a divine prescience, a supernatural influence over human destiny. The same idea crops out in all the monuments of the patriarchal epoch, in the Vedas, in the book of Genesis, and in the poems of Homer. In this belief there is a hidden truth. In the influence of woman, though she be relegated to obscurity, removed from the great events of the world, there is a power which no eye can see, but whose presence is everywhere felt.

In ancient Egypt woman was everywhere the equal of man. This remarkable fact is declared in numerous ways. As you know, their writing was essentially emblematical. Woman was one of their emblems, and it is interesting to notice the peculiar significance given to that emblem. In all modern representations of the virtues, you observe that the emblematic figures are women. Justice, Liberty, Modesty, Purity and the Three Graces are always women. The same custom prevailed unconsciously in Ancient Egypt. There was

a famous emblem, called in the Egyptian language the *neter tu-aut*—"the sacred support." Each Egyptian nome, or province, has its own high priest, its own guardian deity. Four times on the very ancient monuments of Egypt the platforms on which these gods are seen standing are upheld by sacred supports—*neter tu-aut*—and every time these supports are, the high priest on one side and a woman on the other; and not a female slave, but the portrait of the king's wife or daughter. Her costume and her bearing show that she is a royal woman. Thus, according to Egyptian opinion, there was no sustaining power which could raise the gods above this world, without the aid of woman. This was the exalted position which woman occupied in the divine economy. The high priest ranked next to the Pharaoh, and woman was the equal of the high priest. Ought she not to have been satisfied with her rights? She was.

On the walls of the temple of Sebûa are pictured the one hundred and eleven sons and the fifty-nine daughters of the great Ramses. It is worthy of note that these daughters are just as large as the sons. This is a significant fact, for size counts in Egypt. When Pharaoh is pictured as thrashing with his flail all the nations of the world at once, white, black and red, those nations are pigmies. Homer represents Agamemnon as larger than anybody else from his knees up, but the enemies of Pharaoh came only half way up his shin bone, and his wives were as big as he was. No woman was ever a pigmy in Egypt. The idea of the inferiority of woman never took root on the banks of the Nile. Never! The great Ramses, in

his own estimation, was very great. By his statue, once erected at the Ramesseum, he tried to show the world how great he was. That highly polished granite statue measured fifty-seven feet and five inches above the pedestal. Its ears were a yard long. The length of one forefinger measures thirty-nine inches. He thought that God never made anybody quite so large as he, anybody except one, that was his wife. He fought the Hittites for twenty years, all the time calling them "the miserable Hittites," and in battle scenes they are smaller than the Egyptians. Finally both nations agreed to call it a drawn battle. The two kings made a treaty of peace, and Ramses promised to marry the daughter of the Hittite King. We have a picture of that wedding. There sits the great Ramses beside the great God Amon-ra, and one is as large as the other. The Hittite bride enters with her royal father, and she is as large as any of them.

Egyptian women of the Old Empire were not only conspicuous in affairs of state, but they played an important part in ecclesiastical matters. Religion there was accorded a devotion of which we can hardly form a conception. This appears from their priestly system. There was the *U'eb*, or priest, who poured out libations to the God and pronounced final judgment on the purity of the animals brought for sacrifice. There was the *Cher-heb*, who read aloud from the sacred books, especially from those texts which were believed to possess an occult magic power; and there was a third class, whom the Greeks called "prophets." There were, besides, many other less important classes of priests. Almost every person of rank in the Old

Empire (*i. e.*, from the Ist to the XIIth dynasty) combined some priestly duties with his ordinary employment. This was as true of women as of men. They were numerously invested with priestly office. Prof. Ebers explains this in his novel entitled "The Sisters." Generally they were consecrated to Neith or to Hathor, that is, to the generating or nursing powers of nature personified.

In the Middle Empire (from the XIIth to the XIXth dynasty) the laity began to be excluded from the priestly office, except that each prince of a nome (or province) continued to officiate as the priest sacred to the local God of that nome; and his wife was the priestess of that nome. These were the *neter tu-aut*, supporters of the pedestal on which the God stood.

In the later Kingdom (from XIXth dynasty onward) we observe a new departure. There was scarcely a woman, married or single, who did not serve in the temple, either as vocalist or musician, or in some other capacity. The wife of the high priest (observe there was no celibate class in Egypt) and her domestic went and sung or played together in the same choir. Mariette found in a tomb at Abydos an epitaph of the daughter of a stonecutter, who was a priestess. In another tomb, the two wives of a cobbler are in the costume of songstresses, and one of them is called "the songstress of Amon." In still another grave, the wife of a weaver is said to belong to the priestly class. The establishment of this office is interesting in consequence of the ideas with which it was associated in the Egyptian mind. They compared the God to the earthly priest or prince, and the female musicians who played

before him were supposed to contribute to the God's pleasure, just as the women of a harem did to that of the priest or prince. Thus these temple singers formed the harem of the God ; and as on earth, so in heaven, there were different grades among the Delilahs. A few women of high standing had the right to wear the beautiful and honourable title : " The Lady Superior of God's Seraglio." At the very summit of this mystical harem, especially at Thebes, was one legitimate spouse, " the God's Wife," or " the God's hand," or " the adorer of the God," to whose house all the other songstresses belonged. This woman was usually the queen herself. During the Saitic period this woman was the nominal monarch of Thebes, and certain inscriptions seem to imply that she held the same position at the beginning of the XVIIth dynasty. Queen Hatshepsu, one of the most remarkable women in the history of the world, was herself the high priestess, and equipped a magnificent naval expedition to Punt, largely to procure incense for the use of her rock-hewn temple.

Everybody has heard of the royal mummies exhumed by Professor Maspero at Deir-el-Bahari, in the summer of 1881. In February, 1891, a not less valuable discovery was made by Monsieur Grébaut, near the same place. Nearly fifty feet below the surface he struck a rock-cut chamber in which were one hundred and eighty mummy cases, piled one above another. Closer examination proved them to be filled with priests and priestesses of Amon. Some of them were enormous triple mummy cases. There were numerous other funerary objects, especially fifty Osirian statuettes.

They all belong to about the XXIst dynasty. Not far away and near the beautiful temple of Hatshepsu was found an undisturbed tomb of a priestess of Hathor of the XIth dynasty. Her trousseau, buried with her, had not been made up. It consisted of several pieces of exceedingly fine, uncut linen neatly folded. The point I want to make is, that of these one hundred and eighty mummy cases, more than half belonged to priestesses. No official report to this effect has ever been made, so far as I can learn, but this is the positive statement of friends of mine, competent to judge, who stood in the line and saw the mummy cases brought up from the bottom of the well by a rope ; and they afterwards learned from the officials at the Gizeh Museum, that the priestesses in the collection largely outnumbered the priests. The tombs are yielding up their dead, before their time, to tell of hundreds of women who consecrated their lives to the ancient church.

Egyptian women of the common and middle classes were more independent than women of the same rank elsewhere. Daughters inherited from their father's fortune a share equal to that of their brothers. The wife was the mistress of her house, and the husband was there only as a privileged guest. She came and she went at her pleasure. Unlike the women of Syria, she entered the society of men with face uncovered. With us it is in good taste for a woman to be arrayed in gay colors and be decked with ornaments ; not so for men ; but in Egypt it was just the reverse. In comparison with the elaborate costume of men, the wardrobe of women was remarkably simple. From the King's daughter to the peasant, and from the IVth to the

XXth dynasty, all females were robed in the same fashion; and that fashion did not change with the arrival of every steamer or cablegram from Paris or London. It was a single garment, without plaits or wrinkles, fitting so closely to the body that the form was plainly visible. It began under the breast and extended to the ankles. Two straps passing over the shoulders kept it from slipping down. Sometimes the braces were omitted, and then nothing held the dress in place but its tightness. Dress and shoulder straps were of the same color, white, red or yellow. There was no difference between the costume of mother and daughter, between high-born and servants, except perhaps a little embroidery or other decoration in the upper seam. The woman's forehead, chin and bosom were delicately tinted with indelible tattoo, her lips were painted red and around her eyes were borders of black, which extended over her temples almost to her hair. The powder which she used for this purpose was a mixture of antimony and carbon pounded fine. This decoration was supposed to enhance the whiteness of the complexion, give brilliancy to her appearance and protect her eyes from ophthalmia. Her black hair oiled, often tinted blue, extended over her neck and shoulders in small ringlets. Since it required several hours to arrange her hair fashionably, the custom was to dress it only at intervals of ten or twelve days. Feet were bare, like the arms, neck and shoulders, except on feast days, when sandals from the leaves and rind of the papyrus were allowed. Glass bracelets attracted attention to wrists and ankles. A deep collar of pearls or of bugles of enamelled glass, a headband of

flowers on the forehead, completed the costume of festive occasions and supplied the defects of too great, ordinary simplicity.

Very rarely we observe a dress of different style and fabric. 'Ete, the wife of Se-chem-ka, a boss farmer, wore a white dress richly embroidered with variegated pearls, which extended over the breasts between which a triangular piece was cut out. This dress was held up by a girdle without shoulder braces. Somewhat more common, was a dress which covered the shoulders but without sleeves. The neck was V shaped, and over this dress a mantle was thrown.

The wife was the force which set the whole house in motion. She arose at dawn, lighted the fire on the hearth-stone, distributed the rations of the day to the men going to the workshops or field, to the boys and girls going to watch the cows and goats at pasture, and then, when rid of everybody, went down to the nearest water, either canal, pond or river, and while exchanging news with her neighbor, took her morning bath; then, putting her water jar on her head, she returned slowly home; back erect, breast thrust forward, neck rigid under her burden. She soon returns with another jar. When the business of water-carrier is over, she turns miller and baker. She puts a few handfuls of grain on an oval stone, whose concave surface is gently inclined, and grinds her grist with a smaller stone shaped like a grindstone. For hours she works her arms, shoulders, back, whole body to obtain meal enough for one day. The effort is great, the result small. Even after the product of this toil has passed several times through the mill, it is uneven, coarse,

mixed with bran and with grains still unbroken, besides dust, dirt and fragments of stone. She kneads the mass, mixed with a little water, and by way of leaven puts in a bit of paste, and sets it away till morning. Then in the shape of a round cake as thick as her thumb, half a yard in diameter, she spreads it over some hot flat stones and covers it with hot ashes. The fuel she uses, made from the ordure of donkeys and camels, gives the bread a peculiarly disagreeable acrid taste.

Between times the wife cooks, spins, weaves, sews, cuts and makes garments, goes out to sell her doves, chickens, eggs, butter or the cloth she has woven, it is hoped without serious detriment to the squalling young ones she has left at home, or to the new-born babe at her bosom. Married young, a mother at fifteen, a grandmother at thirty, her family grows without respite, swarming around her. A numerous family is regarded as a blessing from the gods, welcomed with all the more gratitude when the trouble and expense are small. Is it a wonder that such a woman grows prematurely old as the result of early and frequent child-bearing and unremitting toil? Her face becomes sunken and wrinkled, breasts deformed, form stooping, and she is decrepit at an age when the favoured women of the United States of America hardly begin to grow old. Yet her position in the family is not affected by her premature disfigurement. She still remains "the mistress of her house," and "the one beloved by her husband." These are the names by which the wife of Ti is called in his famous tomb at Sakkara. Elsewhere a man calls his better half "a palm in loveliness."

Another inscription says : " The one who is esteemed by her husband," and still another, " She who loves her husband." Says Dr. Brugsch, the late Dr. Brugsch—we could have spared any other Egyptologist better—" We meet here, as at the entrance to a beautiful passage way, the Egyptian custom of mutual love between husband and wife, on which was founded the honorable relation of monogamy ; a love which is demonstrated again and again in the inscriptions above the dead." Children designated their parentage by the mother's name, not by the father's. In this the gods set the example, for Horus is often called the son of Isis, with no mention of his father Osiris.

The Egyptian father was pleased with the honour thus conferred on his wife. Says the sage Khoun-shot to his son Ani : " Burden after burden has thy mother borne for thy sake. For three years she fed thee from her bosom, cared for thee in thy weakness and repulsive necessities ; yet her heart was never once impatient enough to ask ' why need I impose on myself this burden ? ' Now, when thou shalt be grown up, and shalt take to thyself a wife and shalt become master of a family, always remember the painful throes of thy birth and the tender care thy mother has taken of thee. Never once has she needed to raise her hands to the gods, that they might pity her impatient curses."

Monogamy was the prevailing custom in Egypt, but this good custom was dishonoured by many a breach. The Ptolemies, for political purposes, often added to their households the heiress of some coveted province. In the reign of Auletes, a high priest who ought to have known better, openly boasted that he had a harem

of beautiful women. Khnum-hotep, of the XIIth dynasty, had a wife Ketty, who bore him three sons, as the record says, "generated by his own body." He also had two sons by his *tatet*, *i. e.*, his housekeeper. This *tatet* goes hunting with him, sitting in the boat behind his wife Ketty, and wearing fewer ornaments. In hunting scenes, woman, for obvious reasons, is not so large as man.

In the XXth dynasty there was a famous criminal suit, of which we have a full report. A gang of tomb robbers were arrested, tried, convicted and punished. One of them, whose name is illegible, is said to have had a wife Tahala, "and also, a woman Jasui, his other wife, number two."

When Amen-hotep III. received his wife Thi, the daughter of the Prince of Naharina (perhaps Mesopotamia), there came with her, for the harem of the great Pharaoh, 317 of their most distinguished women. This shows what the influence of Assyria was on the social question.

Climate has much to do with character. As we approach the torrid zone we not only approach a riot of vegetable life, but we also find the restraints of moral life loosened, and even intellectual life taking on startling efflorescent forms. On the other hand, when we set our faces towards the chaste and self-contained north, we find the human soul girded to more reserved and temperate activities.

No man can shut his eyes to the fact that the moral principles of the ancient Egyptians, respecting social questions, were as lax as those of classical antiquity. No man can cherish a doubt about the freedom with

which they represented, in their hieroglyphics, incidents in life, which according to modern sentiments, ought to be and are scrupulously concealed. A caricaturist, of probably the Middle Empire, with evident pleasure, left a long series of obscene pictures, and accompanied them with notes of explanation. Now, this precious work was found in a grave, not the place in which coarseness is wont to run riot, and was intended as a pleasant reminder to the dead man, just starting, after the resurrection, on his long journey. Evidently it suggested, neither to the author nor to the recipient, the shadow of an impropriety. Moreover, in the recently opened tomb of Unas, of the Vth dynasty, is an inscription which portrays the blissful life of the departed King. The promise is given him, in not over-clean language, that in heaven he may take women from their husbands, according to his own sweet will.

The freedom of such language, even amid the most hallowed associations, reveals habits of thought and speech which we, otherwise, could hardly imagine. Yet, their line of demarcation between the pure and the impure is very distinct. The hieroglyphics uniformly speak disparagingly of her who has been abandoned by her husband for cause and who therefore tramps the streets. "Beware," says the wise man, in the Boulaq Papyrus, "beware of an out-of-doors woman, who has no protector. Do not look at her when she approaches thee. Salute her not. She is an eddy of deep water, whose whirlpool no man can resist." In this connection they had a proverb: "The goose on the wing laughs at the crocodile, but when the goose is asleep on the water, it is the crocodile that laughs." Sometimes

those old Egyptians looked on the other side of the picture. Says the Egyptian moralist: "Happy is he who is wise enough to shun the company of the vile woman: Happy he, who, in his youth, takes to himself one wife, the wife of his youth, who will present to him a son like himself." No page of Egyptian domestic life, or of any other life, contains a more lovely picture than that which shows their idea of conjugal affection. That affection was not always absent even when there was a plurality of wives. On the walls of the rock-hewn tomb of Beni-hassan, in the inscriptions of the glorious XIIth dynasty, the wife Nebit has two sons and three daughters, and the woman Hamat has one son and three daughters. Their names are all cut in the solid rock; and what is especially noticeable, is that each one of these wives has a daughter named after the other wife. Once, then, in the history of this world, the two wives of one man lived peaceably together; a fact so strange that it is worthy to be cut in stone, that it may be remembered through countless millenniums.

The Egyptians had a strange custom of marrying their sisters. During the Ptolemaic and Roman dynasties, this became the popular fad. The most of the Ptolemies married their sisters, and during the reign of the Emperor Commodus it is said that three-fourths of the citizens of Arsinœe had taken their sisters to wife. In this the gods had set the example, for Osiris and Set had taken for wives Isis and Nephtys, their sisters. In the XVIIth dynasty, Nofertere was the consort of her brother Ahmose, Ahmu was the consort of her brother Thothmes I., and Arat was the consort of her brother Thothmes IV., and

the famous Hatshepsu married her brother Thothmes II. A girl sings to her brother: "Oh, my sweet lover! My desire is that I may become thy wife, that my arm may rest on thy arm; that thy life may be gay and happy, for then I can say to my heart: 'It was I who spoke words of love to thy heart.'" In these numerous love songs and marriages between brothers and sisters, perhaps we may conclude that there were different kinds of "sisters." The wife may have sustained a more honourable, if not a more intimate relation, than the so-called "sister." Two quarrymen going down the desert of Sinai took with them their "sisters" rather than their wives.

It has been maintained that consanguineous marriages are such offences against nature that their offspring are the victims of physical or mental weakness. Well, there was Cleopatra, the most romantic of Egyptian sovereigns, the daughter of a brother and sister; the great grand daughter of another brother and sister; and the great, great grand daughter of Bernice, who was both cousin and half sister of her husband. This same Cleopatra wedded her younger brother. Yet history has not regarded her as an imbecile, either in mental or physical qualities. She was not an albino. Her charms and accomplishments won a Cæsar; and then won Cæsar's friend, Marcus Antonius, one of the greatest orators and soldiers of antiquity. Blinded by her allurements, he neglected the world and for her sake surrendered his life.

Among the most important discoveries ever made in Egypt are numerous marriage contracts dating from the time of Bocchoris, of the XXIVth dynasty, to the

Greek and Roman dynasties. The form which these contracts took is as follows:

1. I take thee to be my wife and will establish thee as my wife.
2. I promise as a nuptial dowry—so much.
3. I appoint our eldest son (yet unborn) to be the heir and administrator of all my property.
4. In case I shall dislike thee and take another wife, I promise to pay thee so much. (This was the loop-hole which let in polygamy.)
5. I promise to give for thy support—so much corn, oil, or money, by the month or by the year. (Sometimes the first clause, “I take thee to be my wife,” is omitted, then the contract was not of marriage, but of something else.)

This form of marriage contract stood for generations, for centuries, without material change. When the Greeks had conquered Egypt and established their capital and courts of law at Alexandria, the wife began to find it difficult, sometimes impossible, to compel the fulfillment of that clause in which the husband promises to pay a fine in case he shall take another woman. This difficulty was greater at Memphis than at Thebes, because Memphis was nearer to Alexandria and, therefore, more exposed to Greek influence. What, then, did the young Memphite woman, just contemplating marriage, do? Accept polygamy as inevitable and without redress? Not she! Egyptian history affords no encouragement to those who would prove the mental inferiority of woman. There never was an emergency

for which woman had to confess herself unequal. What, then, did the Memphite girl do? How did she contrive to outwit those cunning Greek lawyers? She inserted in the marriage contract the man's receipt for a sum equal to his entire estate, in return for property which she pretended to have brought to his house. If the young suitor demurred, he could go. No receipt, no marriage. Women struck. We have a contract written in the reign of Euergetes I., about 150 B. C. At this period it was usual, in the contracts, for the husband to address his wife. The contract reads as follows: "Petese, son of Petimouth, whose mother is Heribast, says to the woman N'tuoa, Thou hast brought with thee ten talents. I have received them with my hand. My heart is satisfied with them. I take thee to be my wife; I will establish thee as my wife. While thou shalt remain here, these ten talents shall be thine. If thou shalt become dissatisfied with me and go away, these ten talents shall still be thine."

Now these pretended ten talents are a pure fiction, and in Greek law, at that time, a significant fiction. Even Greek archons, however reluctant, were compelled to admit the validity of a note of hand for value received, even if after the date of that note the parties became husband and wife. Previous to this period, the Egyptian husband was supposed to have paid a dowry to his wife. Henceforth, the wife is thought to have brought a dowry to her husband and to have taken for it his receipt, had it witnessed and recorded in legal form. Suppose, before marriage, a man promises his bride a thousand dollars. Two days after marriage, for some reason, he becomes insolvent. Then the wife

must share with the other creditors ; but, if the husband has already acknowledged the receipt of a thousand dollars as trust funds, which he promises to care for as her guardian, and if that receipt has been publicly recorded, then the wife is a preferred creditor, and has a first general mortgage on all his estate. Under this new arrangement the wife was not so careful as before to affix a penal clause, premising the infidelity of the husband, for had she not complete possession of all his property, anyhow ? What more could she have ? She can therefore afford to omit the clause : “ If I become dissatisfied with thee and take another woman I will pay thee so much,” and inserts instead a declaration of her right to become dissatisfied with him and go away whenever she pleases.

At another period in Egyptian history, it is the woman who, in the contract, addresses the man. In the fourth year of Psammetichus III., the woman T’nesi, daughter of Anach-amen, says to Amon, son of Put’a : “ Thou hast this day paid me the price agreed, that I should become thy servant. Nobody in this world shall be able to deprive thee of my service. I will never escape from thee. I will give thee all that I possess, money, corn, oil, all my property and the children that I shall bear to thee, and the clothes that are on my back, from this 4th year and month *mesoré*, forever. If any one shall come to thee and shall endeavor to make thee ill at ease about me, whatever words he or she may use, even if she shall say “ this is not thy servant,” and shall give thee money or corn, and shall try to win thy heart, I will still be thy servant, and my children shall likewise serve thee. Thou art their

master wherever thou shalt find them. Make oath to me by Amon, and according to the law, that thou wilt take no other woman and do for her what thou wilt do for me, and on my part I will take oath that I will never escape from the room where thou dost live."

It is evident that Amon, son of Put'a, does not propose to marry a wife. Not at all. He has simply bought a female slave. In Egyptian law a man might buy as many such slaves as he could find willing to enter into contract with him. What could be more pathetic than the cry with which this woman T'nesi abandons to her lord and master, all claim to present and prospective property, even to her children, and to the clothes upon her back? Yet it shows that woman in Egypt, at this period, was the equal of man, as free as he to enter into contract or not.

According to another contract, made in the time of Darius, the woman Isis says to the Choachyte Chent-Haeroon: "Thou hast taken me, to-day, for thy wife. Thou hast given me eleven argentei (fifty-five talents) for my nuptial dowry. If I shall be displeased with thee and shall love another man instead of thee, I will give thee nineteen argentei, and besides, will convey back to thee the eleven argentei which thou hast given to me for my dowry. If I shall fail to keep this promise, then I will deed to thee all the property which I possess or shall acquire. I will make no excuses and no defence for not making this conveyance to thee." The point I am trying to make, in presenting these contracts, is, the perfect liberty, the entire equality before the law of the Egyptian man and the Egyptian woman. They show an equality that enabled the woman to claim, word

for word, the very rights which it had once been the exclusive prerogative of the man to claim. Nowhere else in the ancient times, was there any parallel to this condition of woman in Egypt. There was a community of interest, a complete union, dissolved only by death. It was not an affair of money solely. Affection played a preponderating part, and the pecuniary clause was only accessory.

There is, however, one contract, wholly exceptional, because it is a purely commercial transaction. It was given in the seventeenth year of Ptolemy III., who reigned from 247 to 222 B. C.

Petkes, a merchant, had some rather intimate relations with a beautiful young girl. Young girls in Egypt, as everywhere else, have a leaning towards beauty. Detected by her parents, Petkes was surprised by a sudden demand for blackmail. An attachment was put on his property. Then the old folks began to suspect that their attachment might not be valid in law, for they were not quite prepared to show any "value received" by Petkes. What did they do? They contrived a fictitious marriage. We have seen to what use fictitious dowries were put, now the game is carried one step further. A marriage contract was drawn which made provisions for an immediate divorce. Petkes says: "I take thee, Tanope, to be my wife. I have established thee as my wife. Yet I yield to thee a woman's right. I will never try to revoke that right. From this day on, I will acknowledge thee to be my wife, but I will not claim thee. I will not demand of thee that thou shalt be my wife. Without any opposition from me, thou shalt go where it shall seem good

to thee." Then follows a description of the property which Petkes deeds to Tanope. On the back of this contract are the names of sixteen witnesses, enough to make it strong. Poor Petkes! bound hand and foot, without an argenteus in the world, a married man, but on his wedding day and wedding night, without a wife or a bride.

During the administration of the IVth Ptolemy (Philopater), who reigned from 222 to 205 B. C., two causes led to the restriction of the legal powers of married women. 1st. The invasion of Greek ideas, which were not so favourable to women as were those of Egypt; and while Greeks ruled Egypt, this restriction was inevitable. 2d. Egyptian women, in some cases, had abused their rights. They had allowed themselves to extort immense advantages by marriage contracts. The wife, sometimes, took possession of all the property which she and her husband held in common, and administered the estate in a way to compromise the dignity of the husband. Philopater, perhaps the vilest of all the Ptolemies, the man who abandoned his kingdom and threw it into utter confusion for the sake of the infamous woman Agathoclea, this Philopater was so scandalized on account of the liberties enjoyed by Egyptian women, that he planned and executed one of the most remarkable revolutions in the history of the world. Yet, properly speaking, he did not diminish the legal capacity of woman. As daughter and as widow, he left her free to buy, sell, mortgage her property or endorse for a friend, but when she married, all this right disappeared. She could not make a single commercial transaction without

the authority of her husband. What this authorization was, is evident from a conveyance made a few years later. Pasi, son of Harmachis, who is husband of the woman N'toua, says: "As to the above contract, made by my wife, my heart is satisfied with it. I grant to thee and I convey to thee all that my wife has conveyed to thee above. I will make no reclamation from thee. From this day on I will defend thee against all who shall seek to disturb thee in this possession."

Under the reign of his predecessor, Ptolemy Euergetes, a wife could dispose of her property as she pleased, but from this fourth year of Philopater it is the husband alone who can dispose of the property of his wife, and she must submit. It was as though all of a sudden every married woman in Egypt became dispossessed of all her property; of every building and foot of land she owned; of every certificate of stock; of every dress, ornament, sandal or shoulder-strap, even of the ostrich feather she wore on her head, all were restrained. What use in her pretending to own anything which she could not dispose of? Here ended Woman's Rights, 218 B.C. It was a most sweeping revolution. It was a social earthquake. Gifts of property between husband and wife ceased. Some mild and gentle women may have yielded without violence; others yielded, if at all, only under extreme compulsion, and many a husband paid his life as the penalty for his audacity in meddling with property which he had never earned, never paid for, and to which, but for Philopater, he never could have acquired a title. By degrees customs conformed to laws, and Egyptian women tried to content themselves with a legal condition no better and

no worse than that of women in other lands. Strange to say, this Greek fraud, this outrage of the profligate Philopater, became the common law of England, and remains so to this day! Thus the high civilization of Egypt in the third century B.C. was debased to the level of that of the British Empire in the nineteenth century A.D. "*Facilis descensus Averno.*"

It was those old laws and customs that had given to

" The land where the feathery palm trees rise,
And the date grows ripe under sunny skies,"

so many women of high culture and of extended influence, and it was the absence of such laws that explains the absence of woman's hallowed influence elsewhere. Who, for instance, knows the name of one Turkish woman who lived during any part of the period of Egypt's greatness, or since either, for that matter? But in Egypt there was Nitocris, sister of Mense-souphis, of the VIth dynasty. She was called "the beauty with red cheeks." She accepted the throne of Egypt that she might avenge the foul murder of her brother. During the eight years of her reign she completed the third Gizeh pyramid, which Men-kau-ra had left unfinished. She more than doubled its dimensions, and gave it that costly covering of granite which has excited the admiration of travellers for 4,000 years. In the very heart of this pyramid, above the chamber where the pious Men-kau-ra had for eight centuries reposed, Nitocris was entombed, in a magnificent sarcophagus of blue granite, fragments of which are in the British Museum.

Coming down to the XVIIth dynasty we meet with Queen Hatshepsu-Makara-Chnemt-amen, the patron of the most chaste art to be found in Egypt, the originator

of the first peaceful voyage of discovery of any magnitude ever made. For her age, she was both Christopher Columbus and Queen Isabella combined. She kept Egypt in perfect peace during her entire reign of nineteen years, one of the greatest anomalies in all history. What other ancient nation ever had a peace of nineteen years' duration? It was she who invented peace and national prosperity, for they never existed before. And what shall I say more? For the time would fail me if I should tell of Nefer-taten-tenen of the XIIth dynasty; of Futhe-tabu and Queens Sebsen and Kema and Nubuk-ka, of the XIIIth dynasty; and Aa-ho-tep and No-fre-ari of the XVIIth dynasty, and the divine Tai-ri-bau, and Sit-ka-mu and the royal sister, Meri-amen and the divine spouse, Ahmes and Me-seker and Maut-m-ra and Queen Nofert-eiti of the XVIIIth dynasty, and Nofert-ari, the beloved wife of the great Ramses, who subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, from weakness were made strong, and turned to flight the armies of aliens.

In bringing our narrative to a close, the question will arise, how, from all these facts, can we draw the just impartial lesson? In the good time coming, what will be woman's relation to society, to the family, to the State? Either the testimony of history is without authority, and all the lessons of the past valueless, or else we are forced to recognize that one grand and unmistakable law of social progress points to the gradual equality of the sexes before the law. Wherever and whenever a step has been taken towards recognizing the civil and political equality of woman, then and there public morality has not only been polished but

purified. No change has ever been effected in the condition of woman which has not reacted upon the whole constitution of society, root and branch. Whenever man has attempted to degrade woman, he has succeeded only in degrading himself. Whenever he has disregarded the rights of woman, he has lost his own rights. In those lands where woman has been treated as a slave, man has lost the idea of freedom. Marriage has been more durable, just in proportion as the human race has arisen to higher degrees of civilization, for a considerable amount of civilization is essential to the formation of any permanent conjugal union. To the question then : "Is marriage a failure?" the answer is very simple ; that all depends on who is married. As Montesquieu has said : "Those countries, in which polygamy is allowed, are the fatherland of despotism." Wherever woman has been the property of man, man has been the property of the despot. That was the tendency even in Greece. He who has been a tyrant in his seraglio has been a slave everywhere else. Even where woman has preserved her independence but lost her modesty, where looseness of morals and easy divorces have dishonoured marriage, there personal dignity among men has been unknown, and corruption, concealed perhaps at first, has invaded the whole social system. On the contrary, wherever institutions have assured to woman her liberty, her civil rights, her moral dignity, we have seen flourishing, as on a productive soil, domestic and civic virtues, the liberties of man and of the citizen. Even when secluded by unjust laws and customs, out from her prison has escaped, as though by some secret channel, a power which has ex-

tended into every vein and artery, nerve and fibre of the State. The one thing we have needed here in our city is more of the power of woman. We are going to see that want supplied now.

What else remains to be done? Our humane societies, our institutional churches are doing a much-needed work. Respecting them, let no word or hint of detraction be thought of here. Their Girl's Clubs and Boy's Clubs, their kindergartens, their sewing schools and cooking schools, their libraries and fresh-air work and scores of other philanthropies too numerous to be mentioned, are important, worthy of commendation. All praise to the merchant princes who have endowed them, to the loving hearts that, amid self-denials, have cherished them; but, we must never forget, that the foundation of all humanities must be laid in the home. The home neglected, what are your philanthropies worth? Society will rise no higher than its families. Nothing in all this world needs the sympathy, the expression, strength and wisdom of a love at once human and divine so much as does the family, and especially the heart of her who bears the honoured name of wife and mother; the dearest, most precious words ever uttered. There are no other names more replete with tender meaning, more suggestive of self-abnegation, of a hallowed influence that never dies :

“ The mother in her office holds the key
Of the soul ; and she it is who stamps the coin
Of character, and makes the being who would be a savage
But for her gentle cares, a Christian man.
Then crown her Queen of the World.”